

Integrated Regional Water Management Grant Program  
Scoping Meetings – Stakeholder Input

March 2007

## **Performance Based vs. Competitive Program**

### **Definition –**

Performance Based means a grant program that is focused on the content and quality of a grant application. DWR would work with applicants on a scope of work to develop or improve an IRWM plan. When the scope meets a pre-established standard an applicant could pursue a planning grant. Similarly, when an applicant's IRWM plan meets pre-established requirements, the applicant could pursue implementation funding. The program would not be deadline driven.

Competitive means a grant program similar to what has been run in previous rounds, where all applications are due on a specific date; application contents are evaluated against an established set of scoring criteria; applications are ranked; and funding decisions are based on application ranking and available funding.

### **Observations from Previous Efforts –**

- Applicants generally could have benefited from more state involvement in the development of IRWM Plans.
- Applicants could have benefited from a more interactive/iterative grant program versus submitting everything in an application package and being critiqued only on the single submission.
- Not all applicants are at the same stage in plan development making it difficult for some to compete.
- Deadlines, rather than long-term goals have driven past planning efforts

### **DWR Concept for IRWM Grant Program –**

DWR is considering modifying the program to be more performance based. DWR would have more contact with applicants to monitor and assist performance, and deadlines would not drive the process.

### **Input Questions –**

**From your region's perspective, what are the advantages/disadvantages of a Competitive Grant Program?**

There are clearly advantages and disadvantages to each type of grant program. Some of the disadvantages of a Competitive Grant Program, similar to the recent Prop. 50 Implementation Grant, include: high cost to applicants – particularly hard on low-income areas, an intensive staff effort during a concentrated time period and the relative lack of feedback from staff/reviewers about the proposals during the process. Some of the advantages include: A predictable process with well defined rules and requirements; Due to the intensive, deadline driven process – there is a beginning and an end to the application process and if a region does have the resources to put together a strong application – they stand a good chance of getting funded, rather than a first-come-first-served approach to funding projects based on performance measures (i.e. IRWMP quality).

The very intensive process we recently experienced in Step 2 was stressful for everyone; applicants and State staff alike. It was a very high stakes effort for everyone.

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**Performance Based or Competitive Program Input**

**From your region's perspective, what are the advantages/disadvantages of a Performance Based Grant Program?**

Advantages: In a performance based approach a region would have more State staff feedback and know where they stand and could perhaps get more guidance on plan or project development; the timing and sequence of effort are better since presumably regions would prepare their plans first and seek project funding once their plan is in place (not the case with many entities during the first round of Prop. 50 funding; many were simultaneously applying for Implementation grants while finalizing their plans); there would be more opportunity for coordination among regions since they wouldn't be in direct competition with each other.

Disadvantages: There could be equity issues with how the funds are allocated since it would probably end up being a first-come-first-served approach – some regions will have a more difficult time with their plans and might “miss out” on funding; could be more challenging for disadvantaged communities (unless the funding sources for DACs were kept separate and there were funds earmarked specifically for them).

Either way, the quality of a region's planning effort and proposed projects should be the guiding factor. In both performance and competitive processes – some regions will not get funding

**Which type of program would your region prefer and why?**

It seems that the nature of the funding source would dictate which approach works best. Some grant programs lend themselves to an ongoing process, while others are more one-time.

In general, the Watersheds Coalition members would welcome a hybrid of the two processes, incorporating the advantages of each. It would be preferable to be able to have an iterative grant application process, with State staff feedback along the way, though still maintaining a competitive process driven by pre-determined guidelines and timelines.

**Are there other ideas or suggestions you have concerning performance based versus a competitive grant program?**

Performance based programs should evaluate the applicant's ability and resolve to follow through in implementing the programs/projects that were funded. Given this type of performance-based system, competitive programs have a place because some entities might not have an actual performance record and thus such entities might be shut out from a performance based program when the previous performance record is considered in the funding decision.

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## IRWM Plan Standards

### Observations from Previous Efforts –

Minimum standards for IRWM plans included in the guidelines may not be sufficient to ensure high quality. Governance of an IRWM plan was not always easily addressed. Project development and selection was not always tied to measurable plan objectives. Stakeholder involvement was inadequate in some plans.

### Other Observations –

Proposition 84 contains language that will necessitate changes in the guidelines and standards. Eleven funding areas will limit competition as a means to ensure quality of plans.

### DWR Concept for IRWM Grant Program –

- DWR is considering emphasis on planning prior to funding implementation projects.
- DWR is considering holding IRWM Plans to pre-established standards.
- Standards would be added or modified (such as project prioritization and governance) in the guidelines.
- Applicants would not be eligible to pursue implementation grants until the IRWM Plan meets a pre-established standards.
- Planning grants would be predicated on a scope of work that produces an IRWM plan that will meet the pre-established standards.

### Input Questions –

#### General Feedback:

In general, the development of the IRWMP for the Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County has been a positive, collaborative process. It is the first time in recent years that so many agencies and organizations have come together in the region to develop a comprehensive water management plan. We view it as a dynamic process; the IRWMP is a living document that will continue to improve and change as needs in the region change and new projects and programs are proposed and implemented.

We understand that the IRWM Plan Standards will be changing for subsequent rounds of IRWM Grant funding (Prop. 50, 84 and IE). The standards provided in the state Prop. 50 IRWM Planning Guidelines are lacking in specificity, presumably to allow for flexibility as unique regions develop plans that suit their needs. We often struggled while developing our IRWMP to interpret what was intended or expected in some of the standards. We would like to see a bit more definition provided and/or examples to clarify what is expected in the standards, particularly if DWR is considering “holding IRWM Plans to pre-established standards” as mentioned above. It would be good to have a balance between flexibility and specificity. We realize that a one-size-fits-all approach is not beneficial. Model plans and examples would be helpful.

We would also like to suggest that DWR consult with those regions that have already developed IRWMPs or are currently developing them, while developing the new guidelines. This could be accomplished by convening a statewide advisory group or forum to provide focused feedback on the IRWM Plan standards. Some discussion may occur at the regional level in meetings with DWR, but it would be beneficial for agencies across the state to network on plan development issues, and provide feedback on the standards a group thereby benefiting from each other's experiences.

Regarding water management strategies, we understand the new IRWM Plan Standards will include the water management strategies contained in the California Water Plan. We would like further discussion about these strategies, as some of them don't fit well into the context of the other strategies in the plan and/or may be more appropriately implemented at the state level rather than by a local region.

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**IRWM Plan Input**

Based on your experience with the current standards which ones were difficult to address? Please discuss what made them difficult.

One of the hardest standards to address was integration. We weren't certain what aspect of the plan/projects this applied to. We ended up interpreting it to mean: integration among projects, integration of water management strategies and integration of projects and programs across watersheds.

It was also difficult to address the Impacts and Benefits standard since it broadly applied to IRWMP implementation. It seems self-evident that the programs and project identified in the plan would have broad positive impacts and benefits.

Which standards, if any, were not helpful in your IRWM Plan?

There is a lot of overlap between objectives and priorities. It was difficult to differentiate what was expected. More explanation of this would be helpful.

What elements would be helpful for DWR to include or explain in a governance standard?

The current governance structure for our IRWMP has worked very well for our region. We prefer that this remain flexible, within the context of the statute, so that each region can determine which form of governance works best for its IRWMP and project implementation process. Examples could be provided regarding the types of governance structures and the means to formalize them, such as a memorandum of understanding, joint powers agency, letters of agreement, or stakeholder group by-laws.

What elements would NOT be helpful for DWR to include in a governance standard (what would make a governance standard too restrictive)?

We would prefer NOT to see a prescriptive process that details how many participants or entities, the type of agreements among entities. Our process has been fairly informal, based on trust and the relationships established among participating agencies. That is one of the reasons we believe we have been so successful.

In what areas was it important for your plan to exceed the minimum standards?

We chose to address all 20 water management strategies included in the guidelines, rather than limiting our plan to the 11 required strategies. We also sought broad support for the IRWMP, resulting in over 32 resolutions of adoption and letters of support. We also did not limit ourselves to the minimum number of entities (three agencies at least two that provide water) to comply with the Guidelines or the Implementation Grant requirements (i.e. all project proponents). We also reached out to adjacent regions to address the needs of entire watersheds, even though they were located outside our region boundaries.

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**Disadvantaged Communities**

**Comment Summary from Previous Efforts –**

Incentives to reduce cost share for DAC did not address hardships DACs face engaging the IRWM process.

**DWR Concept for IRWM Grant Program –**

Through Prop 84 DWR does have the means to provide some technical assistance and financial assistance to help DAC engage in their regional IRWM processes. DWR is considering implementing this assistance early in the process so DAC's can engage more fully in IRWM planning and/or application preparation processes. DWR is also considering allocating funding to projects that meet critical needs of DACs.

**Input Questions –**

What types of technical assistance would be helpful to augment your region's efforts to engage DACs in the IRWM process?

It would be beneficial to have separate processes for funding implementation projects so that DACs are assured of some funding.

It would be helpful to have information printed in Spanish.

Are there specific functions that DWR personnel can provide in the IRWM process that would help engage DACs?

It would be beneficial to our region if the criteria for identifying DACs were changed to reflect the local cost of living. The current formula is based on income; there should be consideration given to housing costs which vary substantially around the state. The median price of houses in Ventura County and other coastal communities is much higher than inland counties.

Provide some assistance to regions to determine which issues are of concern to the DACs and assist them getting involved in the IRWM process.

In addition to technical assistance, is there also need for financial assistance and how do you envision those funds being used?

Some funds to help DACs participate in the process – i.e. pay them to participate in meetings through grants.

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**Disadvantaged Community Support Input**

Is addressing water quality and supply issues that directly impact DACs a priority in your region?

Yes, as reflected in some of our projects.

Can the IRWM Process address direct water supply and quality problems in DACs? If so how? How was this addressed in your IRWM Plan?

Yes. The larger stakeholder group process should include representatives from DACs. We did have agencies and cities serving DACs participating in our process and we addressed these issues in our plan and targeted some of these areas with specific projects.

In terms of community members in DAC's, they may not understand the some of the issues regarding water supply, population, water quality, habitat protection or watershed planning. If they do, they may not know how to address them in their daily lives given the reality of competing priorities (i.e., food, shelter, other utilities). We need to enhance our outreach to these areas, and provide appropriate education and information.

Are there other ideas or suggestions you have concerning engaging disadvantaged communities in the IRWM process? Are there items that DWR should emulate, retain or drop from other grant programs regarding DACs?



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## Regional Definition

### Comment Summary from Previous Efforts –

Provide a better definition of what a region is. Provide direction on appropriate regions.

### DWR Concept for IRWM Grant Program –

Work with regional efforts upfront to establish functional regional/sub-regional efforts. The timing of Funding for implementation efforts will reflect the readiness of the various funding areas. DWR will work with regions to “pre-screen” regional efforts for readiness.

### Input Questions –

Based on you experience with the existing IRWM Grant Program, how can the definition of a “region” be improved?

Regions should be defined in a way that would respect natural boundaries (i.e. watersheds) both across and within political boundaries, so that water resources are addressed in an integrated, holistic manner. Using our Watersheds Coalition (WCVC) as a model, we allow the watershed-based committees to define their key resources needs/challenges and then propose solutions within those watersheds. To the extent that a problem is better served across watersheds or by the larger region, we have a governance structure in WCVC that facilitates that solution.

What factors other than water management objectives and hydrologic, watershed, and political boundaries should be considered in establishing IRWM Plan Region Boundaries?

For Prop 84 funding areas with multiple IRWM Planning Regions, identify possible mechanism for equitable distribution of limited funding.

We prefer that the regions in each funding area work together to determine the best means to distribute funds equitably. There is currently some uncertainty about the role DWR will play in allocated funds and whether or not there will be a competitive process. We support development of guidelines that allow for regions to determine their own priorities, consistent with the bond language and intent as opposed to enabling legislation that could possibly call for a one-size-fits-all approach.

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### Stakeholder Involvement

For your region, please describe briefly who are the stakeholders and rate their level of involvement.

	STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS	HIGH	MED	LOW
	Water Districts	✓		
	Sanitary Districts	✓		
	Flood Control Districts	✓		
	City Government	✓		
	County Government	✓		
	Municipalities	✓		
	Associations of Government Agencies		✓	
	Tribes	NA		
	Watershed Groups	✓		
	Environmental Groups	✓		
	Community Based Groups		✓	
	Environmental Justice Organizations		✓	
	Representatives Disadvantaged Communities		✓	
	Private Landowners			✓
	General Public			✓
	Universities		✓	
	Industry/Trade Organizations		✓	
	Other – List  Agriculture Other NGOs such as League of Women Voters			✓

Please discuss if there are other stakeholders who should be involved in your regional efforts, but have not been.

In the future, we will seek to gain more participation from the agricultural community and the general public. We will seek to broaden stakeholder involvement in our watershed committees.

Please discuss efforts that your region has made to ensure that IRWM Planning efforts are inclusive of diverse stakeholder interests.

We have maintained a very open and inclusive process. We continue to seek new participants, maintain a website and e-mail group to keep everyone informed and try to schedule meetings at convenient times and locations. In the future we will consider ways to help the NGOs participate more fully, including providing funds for travel. We also want to be sure that the mix of projects selected for implementation reflect the diverse needs of different stakeholder groups and meet multiple plan objectives.



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OPTIONAL – Please provide brief information about the person(s) completing this form	
Region:	Ventura County – Watersheds Coalition
Name	Lynn Rodriguez, Sue Hughes and Dee Zinke
Address	Ventura County County Executive Office 800 So. Victoria Avenue Ventura, CA 93009
If you are not already on the DWR IRWM Mailing/Distribution List. Please add the above listed person(s) to the IRWM distribution list. <input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/> Lynn Rodriguez	